533 their praises and beating fiercely on their drums in the hope of receiving a few cowries, kola nuts, or at least some beer.

326 306 The smiths (saba), by which is meant those who work with iron, extract the metal from the ore and make it into hoes and hatchets. They sometimes work with wood, as in other parts of the Sudan, but usually this industry is carried out by members of another guild. The jewellers make bracelets, file teeth, repair worn hoes, etc. They are not smiths, properly speaking, and anyone may exercise their trade.

767 The undertakers (lada) offer gifts to the spirits of the deceased on the day of death or its anniversary (koure). They also lay the corpse in the grave, and if death was due to illness, it is impossible to proceed with the burial without them. But anyone may dig the grave and carry the corpse. We shall discuss the undertakers again when funerals are described.

Chapter 2. The Family

596 The structure of the Roman family and the power granted to the paterfamilias, its very foundation, have been greatly and justly admired. Something like the paterfamilias is to be found among the Mossi. Would that we also found the Roman matron! As we have seen above, every Mossi is subject to the Moro Naba, a province chief, a canton chief, and a village chief. He is also subject in a more immediate sense to the head of his family, and he can do nothing without his consent. If he wishes to marry, he consults the family head, in whose household his bride will lodge when she arrives in the village. On the other hand, the man who wishes to give his daughter in marriage never does so without consulting his family head, at whose house the girl will stay before she goes to live with her husband.

[551] The family is thus very tightly organized among the Mossi. Each family has a name which is seldom used; if one of its members was ever naba, the name derives from that of the first naba. Members of
[582 784] the same family may not intermarry, and usually they all have the same kisgou (prohibition), whether the term designates a totem, a taboo, or something else altogether. The head of the family is its oldest member. Upon his death, the authority is transferred not to his

596 heir but to the oldest member of the family. Nothing is done without consulting the family head, and even if a member of the family occupies an important post, he continues to show the greatest deference toward his family head, his elder. This is why the present prime minister of Koupéla, the Saman'Naba, leaves the prerogatives of a family head to his uncle; he does not take the liberty of offering sacrifices on the Day of the Dead, and he consults his elder on all
596 matters which fall within his jurisdiction. The head of the family,
681 however, does not have the right of life or death over its members or over his own wives. Even if the latter steal or commit adultery, they may not be put to death; only the district chiefs may kill their own wives. A husband or family elder may beat them, put them in irons, or even more rarely /35/ turn them out of the household, but he may not kill them. Also, the family head may not dispose of the family property, nor force his kin to hand it over. He may, however, request his relatives to help him pay his debts or obtain a wife, but he may not force them to do so. Nevertheless, they always help him as best they can.

593 Children are directly subject to their father. While the latter
596 consults the family head whenever he must make a serious decision, the children consult their father, who in turn goes to the family head, who often goes to the village chief, who resorts to the canton chief, who consults the head of the province if the matter warrants it. Mature reflection thus precedes every serious decision.

593 The father is the absolute master of his children. He has the right of life or death over them, and sometimes he made use of this right, especially when a child was born deformed or became an incorrigible thief. He sees to the marriage of his daughters. He may exchange them for other women, or he may give them in marriage to a creditor in order to pay his debts. He may place his sons in the service of a relative or friend. The eldest son seldom remains in his father's household, especially if the father is wealthy or a naba; the father is too afraid that his son may do away with him, the sooner to come into his inheritance. To give one's son to another man is a convenient way to get rid of the problem of his marriage; it will become the concern of the boy's master.

861 Fathers take little part in the education of their children. Daughters always remain with their mothers until their marriage. Sons help their father as soon as they are old enough to work, but they never

428 When the head of a household dies, he leaves an inheritance of varying magnitude. No one touches it until the day of koure. As soon as the festivities are over, the eldest son summons the head of the family and all his uncles, brothers, and sisters. The partition of the property must be carried out. Theoretically, the whole inheritance, all the women, cattle, and cowries, belongs to the eldest son if he is married [429] or of marriageable age. If he is too young, one of the younger brothers of the deceased must act as his guardian, administer the property, and transfer it to his nephew when he comes of age. Of course, the uncle squanders his ward's property. If the deceased leaves no male heirs, the inheritance devolves to his eldest daughter. If he has no children, /76/ his younger brother, or if there is none, the son of his oldest brother, inherits the property. The oldest brother himself never inherits, except in the case of a naba; in such a case, if there is no other heir, the oldest brother comes into the fortune.

428 587 Although in theory the oldest son is the absolute master of all his father's property, in reality he must share part of it. If he has younger brothers of marriageable age, he gives them one of his father's wives. Every brother who inherits a wife must shave her head. If she refuses to have this done, it means that she does not want this new husband. 428 If the heir's brothers are too young, he gives them some livestock, cattle, sheep, goats. If the inheritance is sufficient to allow it, the uncles also get their share. No one may force the eldest son to share the property. He may state point blank that he intends to keep everything, but this will cause him difficulties and create enemies, especially if his father has squandered a nephew's fortune. Upon his uncle's death, a nephew defrauded of his father's property reminds his cousin of the matter and requests indemnities, which are usually granted in the form of wives or livestock.

428 592 The new heir becomes head of the household in his turn and often inhabits his father's soukala; sometimes he builds himself another one. He is now his own master, subject only to the family head, while his unmarried sisters and younger brothers come under his jurisdiction. He has inherited the property, but he has not inherited the power. If his father was a naba and he wishes to succeed him, he must now solicit the position from the higher naba who is empowered to grant it.

594 Such is the family life of the Mossi. To summarize: marked submission to nabas and family heads, marked freedom toward those who are not in a position of authority. The wives live side by side

596 under the supervision of the husband's first wife; the daughters are never their own masters at any age and thus live in semi-slavery. The children do not spend much time together. They undoubtedly have affection for each other and show it at times, and their parents love them, but there does not exist among them that bond, that family spirit which only Christianity can bring them.

/77/ BOOK IV. RELIGIOUS LIFE

Chapter 1. Beliefs and Ethics

000 We have studied so far the external manifestations of Mossi life: the political structure and its hierarchy, the family structure and all its derivatives, marriage, birth, life, and death. We must now take a further step and carry our investigation to a more intimate level, to analyze the deepest and most persistent feelings and attitudes of these people. It is very difficult to understand one individual and to grasp the motives for his actions in everyday life; it is all the more difficult to do so in the case of a people, especially when this people does not practice self-analysis and when no writings exist to reflect its soul, which must be detected in its most spontaneous manifestations, in the most commonplace conversations. We would, however, know almost nothing about the Mossi if we did not know their ideas about God, the world, and ancestral and other spirits, as well as the relationships they have established with this invisible world. Religious life plays a very important role in the life of any people. Would it be an exaggeration to state that the significance of its role increases with the primitiveness of the people and their resulting tendency to attribute all they cannot explain to preternatural intervention?

124 The Mossi do not like to broach these subjects with foreigners, especially with Whites, whose beliefs they know to be so different from theirs. Not only are they afraid to offend the spirits by revealing their secrets, but they fear the derisive smile. One must be careful not to laugh at their ideas, no matter how childish they may seem to us. To laugh at them is the surest way of hurting their feelings and of making them hopelessly secretive. In any case, is not sincere belief worthy of some respect, even if this respect is mixed with a certain amount of pity?

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their allegiance directly to the *Yatenga Naba* for historical reasons or because their chiefs are related to the royal lineage and superior within the social hierarchy to the local nobility (*nakomse*) to which the canton chiefs belong.

Subordinate, in turn, to the canton chief, is the village chief (*Tenga Naba*), who is the central authority in the aggregation of "quarters" (*sakse*) of which a Mossi village is composed. These quarters are the dwellings of patrilineal extended families and lineages (*boodoose*). Such a residence is called a *saka* if it contains the house of the lineage elder (*sak kasama*) or a *yiri* if it represents only a junior segment. In either case the dwelling of the oldest male in the group is surrounded by the separate houses of his wives, his younger brothers and their wives, and his sons, nephews, cousins, and their wives and children. Each adult individual has a separate house within the *saka*.

The smallest unit within the residence of the lineage is the nuclear family (*zaka*) composed of a man, his wife, and their children. If a man has more than one wife, the term *zaka pedere* (*zaka* half) may be used when the man's relationship with one of his several wives is being considered. He himself is called *zaka soba*. As a young man's family grows, each of his new wives is provided with a house adjoining his. In addition to his house and the houses of his wives, each man's household contains several granaries used to store the produce from the millet fields he has been assigned by his lineage. It is with the members of his own household that a man is in most frequent social and economic interaction. The fields he works with their assistance are the principal source of the food supply for the nuclear family unit.

The *yiri* is the next largest social unit within the *saka*. The term refers to the extended family dwelling inhabited by a man, his wives, his male children, and their wives and children. It may be composed of as many as fifteen separate nuclear families. While its inhabitants usually consist of the married sons of an older man and their nuclear families, it may also be composed of a man, his wife and children, and his younger brothers and their wives and children. Since its members are closely related within the lineage, there is greater social and economic interaction among them than there is with the other lineage members. As the *zaka soba* is the principal and final authority within the *zaka*, the *yiri soba* is most important within the *yiri*.

Composed of the nuclear and extended family dwellings of its members, the Mossi residential unit is typically inhabited by all of the local representatives of the sib. In addition to the dwelling of the lineage elder, it contains the altar (*kiemserogo*) where the ancestral spirits of the lineage are worshiped. The lineage elder has authority over everyone living within his *saka*. As counselor to the village chief and intermediary with

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
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the ancestral spirits, he is the principal political and religious authority within his lineage.

The single term *boodoo* is used to refer to three separate groups: the sib, the lineage, and the local residential kin group described above. Aside from formalized recognition of patrilineal descent and inheritance, the lineage functions most significantly as a local residential kin group in which the economic and social participation of the female non-members is as important as that of the men. Although the men are most prominent in the direction of its affairs, their wives have a considerable, if somewhat indirect, effect upon decisions made. Even in the relationship of the members of the lineage to their ancestral spirits (*kiemse*), the women play an important part in preparing the food and the libations to be offered. They give birth to the members of the lineage, nourish them until weaning (usually at the age of two), and provide them with guidance and training for their ascribed roles. In the education of the female members of the lineage the wives play a more important part than the men. But it is in their economic activities that the significance of the women's role is best seen. In addition to their farm work, they co-operate fully in repairing roofs, flooring the courtyards, and even assisting in the brick-making which precedes house-building. The economic and social contribution of the wives is of equal importance with that of the husbands and sons, and it is more important than that of the daughters, since females born into the lineage marry and leave just as they become fully productive members of their fathers' households.

Daughters, however, serve their lineage in a different way. As they are successful in winning for themselves a good name in the households of their husbands, so the bond of economic and social co-operation established between the two lineages at the time of marriage is strengthened. When they mature, they return to assist the members of their lineage with ritual obligations to the ancestors. If they are left childless at their husband's death, they may return to their father's household to reside.

Separated from one another by millet fields and the public way, the dwelling of each Mossi kin group has the appearance of a small walled village. Each round mud house with its thatched roof has a separate courtyard which is usually contiguous to the courtyards of the other houses in the residential unit of which it is a part. The individual dwellings are constructed in such a way—the wall of each house or courtyard being contiguous to that of the nearest neighbor—as to form a circular wall whose exterior is closed at all but two points. The dwelling of each kin group has a small exit and a large open entrance way just within which is located a thatch-covered sun shelter (*zande*) where the men of the lineage gather to rest, to work at small crafts, and to talk. Guests are

especially, subsisted upon it. The victims, children from twelve to fifteen years old, were provided by the Moro Naba, who kept them afterward or sold them to the Haoussa.

In 1900 our ambassador to Turkey learned that a shipment of eunuchs which had reached Constantinople had originated in Mossi territory, which we had occupied since 1896. He warned the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who notified his colleague the Minister of the Colonies. Strict orders were issued to put an end to this Mossi industry, which has since ceased to exist.

Let us finally add the grain trade, which is unusual in Mossi territory. In the years 1906, 1907, and 1908 which saw poor harvests, however, the Mossi were forced to acquire grain in Yatenga (Ouahigouya circle) and in Gourounsi territory by selling livestock.

We have now concluded our discussion of Mossi occupations. Let us proceed to a study of the family and the superposed social organisms.

Chapter II

The Mossi: The Family, Public Powers, and Religion

We must state first that the Mossi family is a partly decommunalized family. This may come as a surprise in view of the foregoing section on work (cultivation predominates, stockbreeding is poor, industries flourish, trade is nonexistent), which had led us to expect something altogether different. Nevertheless, this is a fact.

The family is even highly decommunalized, although not everywhere to the same degree. In this respect, five different family types are to be found.

The first two are quite rare. They would seem to be witnesses to an ancient state of affairs which has now vanished. Thus, one finds the common patriarchal type among those blacksmiths who are gathered into /special/ quarters or even villages and whom we mentioned in the section on industries. This type is found only among them and not among isolated blacksmiths, where only the common Mossi family type occurs.

596 326 Are those blacksmiths who live in groups unaltered remnants of the ancient population as it existed prior to the Dagomba invasion? Are they autochthonous? Should their statement that they are not Mossi be interpreted in this light? This is probable, although by no means certain. In any case, the family among them is of the purest patriarchal cast.

596 326 592 Among them, all households belonging to a family occupy the same soukala. When a young man marries, he remains in the family soukala.

/543/ During the winter season, the occupants of the soukala work in the fields of the head of the soukala from six in the morning until three in the afternoon. From three o'clock on, they till their own little individual plots.

During the dry season, they all work together at the blacksmith's trade with the head of the soukala, and all profits devolve to the latter. They work from sunrise to sunset.

The head of the soukala provides them with food throughout the year. As for their clothing, they procure it themselves with the returns from their little plots. The same applies to bracelets, jewels, etc. (as for grigris, they do not like them).

The head of the soukala buys each man his first wife, and in return gives in marriage all the daughters of the soukala.

596 428 326 When the head of a soukala dies, it is his younger brother who takes command of the soukala. He also takes all the goods, fields, livestock, slaves, cowries, and the tools used to extract and work the iron. The sons get nothing. Everyone remains in the soukala.

When the supply of brothers has been exhausted, the oldest son in the whole soukala receives the inheritance.

If no males remain in the soukala, the sisters come first in line before the daughters if they have the same father and mother as the deceased, but after /them/ if they were born of the same father only. They take half of the movable property and give half to the daughters. They apportion their share evenly among themselves. The soukala and fields go to the village chief. If there are no sisters born of the same father and mother, the inheritance goes to the daughters, and next in line to the sisters born of the same father as the deceased. If there are neither sisters nor daughters, the whole estate goes to the village chief.

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326 As we can see, the common patriarchal family is found among those blacksmiths who live in groups.

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596 The second Mossi family type is one we had occasion to mention here and there in the section on work. Contrary to the first type, which is found only in a special section of the population, this one occurs throughout the Mossi but as a rare /544/ and exceptional case. All the households in the family still live together, but every household works for itself. This is the type we studied among the Nankana and other groups of cultivator-breeders under the name of Nankana type No. 3 /not translated/.

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592 We come now to those Mossi family types which are widespread rather than exceptional. They correspond to the Nankana type No. 4 (every household lives separately and works separately), or rather they depart from it in the direction of even greater decommunalization. There are three variants, namely, one that corresponds to the pure Nankana type No. 4, and two where decommunalization is more accentuated. Let us describe them in turn.

Here is the first variant:

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596 1. The households live separately. As soon as a young man marries, he settles on his own with the help of his family. When a family head gives one of the family's sons a wife, he uses a vacant soukala if there is one available. If there is none, the son builds a new soukala with the help of his father and of the family head.

2. Every household works separately (except for the clearing of family fields), procures its own food, clothing, and subsistence. The married son, however, comes and helps his father a little now and then. During the dry season, for example, he helps him repair the soukala. Or else he offers him small gifts from time to time.

When someone, on marrying, settles separately, the head of the family usually gives him some family field that was once cleared and cultivated and has since lain fallow.

3. Although households work separately, the children of the households are not given in marriage by their father and mother, but by the head of the family. The latter buys wives for the boys,
[583] but he also gives the daughters in marriage and receives the bride price.

584 To arrange a marriage, one offers gifts to the girl's family on
596 festive days. The gift grows more sizable from year to year. Finally, at the time of marriage, one offers 25 or 30 francs as a bride price.

Girls are also exchanged among families. /545/ One family may pledge one of its daughters to another family for one of its young men, while the second family provides a girl for a boy of the first family.

Even if a man buys a wife at market and has children by her, it is not he but his family head who gives those children in marriage.

If a young man goes himself to a family head, asks for a wife, and obtains her without any payment, without any bride price, it is the girl's father who disposes of the first daughter born of the union. He is entitled to take her with him as soon as she is no longer at the breast, and he will later give her in marriage. The other children are given in marriage by their father's family head.

596 782 4. The head of the family performs religious sacrifices for the whole family, and acts as its judge.

596 428 5. When a family head dies, the headship of the family goes to his younger brother along with the family property, that is, his soukala if it is a family one (built by the family or with the help of the family), the available family fields, the movable family property (livestock, slaves, cowries, clothing, family jewels, etc.). The movable private property of the deceased, on the other hand (livestock, slaves, cowries, clothing, private jewels, etc.) go to the oldest son along with the fields cultivated by the deceased and by his household, that is, the private property of the deceased. Finally, the soukala, if it was built by the deceased all by himself and without the aid of his family, goes to his oldest son as well since it is private property.

The brother who inherits gives some of the movable family property to the other brothers, but only if he feels like doing so.

Here, family property is by far the most important.

Such is the oldest variant of the Mossi family type that prevails at the present day. Actually, this variant still persists in quite a few Mossi localities.

592 Now, here is the second variant:
596 1. Every household lives separately, works separately (except for the clearing of the family fields), and sees to its own subsistence.

592 People who are thus settled on their own work for themselves and no
596 longer for /546/ their father, with whom they lived and for whom they worked prior to marriage. They nevertheless offer gifts to their father from time to time.

2. As far as the marriage of children belonging to those households is concerned, a distinction must be made among the following possibilities. When they are the children of wives bought by the family head, it is the latter who gives them in marriage. When they are the children of wives obtained by the husband himself, it is the latter who gives them in marriage.

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Or else a rough compromise is made (in Boussouma province, for example). The first son and first daughter of the union are given in marriage by the family head, while the other children are given in marriage by the household.

3. It is the head of the family, however, who alone is entitled to offer religious sacrifices for the whole family, and who always acts as its judge.

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4. When the head of the family dies, the headship is transmitted to his younger brother along with the family property. The private property of the deceased goes to all his sons, but the oldest son is favored. This actually constitutes the difference between this family type and the preceding one as far as inheritance is concerned. While in the preceding type the oldest son alone inherited, in this type all sons inherit but the eldest is heavily favored.

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Thus, if the soukala was the private property of the deceased, it goes to the eldest son. If he is able to cultivate them all, the latter also keeps all the fields cultivated by the deceased. If he is not able to do so, he gives the surplus to his brothers.

As for livestock, if there are ten head that belonged privately to the deceased, and if there are three sons and two daughters, the oldest son will get four, each other son will get two, and each daughter will get one.

[567] As for slaves, if the situation is the same, the oldest son will take five out of ten, the second son three, the third son two, and the daughters will get none.

Cowries and grain are apportioned in the same manner.

In addition to these shares given to the younger sons and to the daughters, it must be noted that private property has acquired greater

596 428 significance vis-à-vis family property in this second Mossi family type. /547/ Thus, my informant stresses that here family property still has greater significance than private property, but at the same time he adds that in every inheritance he witnessed, the soukala always went to the oldest son, no matter what its origin. He corroborates this with information about his own family, as follows:

He lives, he says, with five wives, two daughters, two unmarried cousins who are the sons of one of his father's brothers, an unmarried cousin who is the son of one of his father's sisters, a nephew who is the son of his own sister, in short, twelve persons including him.

The soukala where he lives once belonged to his father and was built by the latter alone. He has thus inherited it, even though his father had a younger brother.

Incidentally, the brother got nothing, since my informant's father left nothing beside the soukala, no family property or private worth much.

To whom will the soukala go when he dies? Since he has no son, he replies, it will go to his younger brother (he has a younger brother who lives in a separate soukala). Supposing he had a son, however? Then it would go to his son.

I counter that it should go to his brother, since he did not build it himself but inherited it from his father (that is, from his own and his brother's common father), in accordance with the rule he mentioned earlier. He nevertheless holds, however, that it is not so, that younger brothers never did inherit a soukala, I cannot make him alter his position.

596 423 178 This gives us a living example of how the Mossi family has changed. In the old days, family property went along with the family headship to the younger brother. The soukala, for example, figured in almost every case among the family property, either because the family had given it ready made to the young man, or simply because the family had helped him build it. A soukala was private property only when the young man had built it altogether by himself (a very unusual case). Later, the soukala came to be considered private property when it had been built by the young man

596 with the help of his father and family head (which is by far the
423 most frequent occurrence), /548/ while in such a case it had for-
178 merly been considered family property. Finally, the soukala came to be regarded in every case as personal property and to be transmitted for that reason to the oldest son. This, incidentally, is the same evolution that applied to property in general, as we shall see shortly.

593 Now, here is the third and last variant of the prevailing Mossi family type. Nowadays, this variant is by far the most widespread.

1. Every household lives separately, works separately, and procures its own food and subsistence. The help of neighbors is enlisted to clear the fields.

584 2. Every household gives its own children in marriage. The family head no longer does so.

593 As soon as a man has a son, he chooses a little girl who will go to the boy when he reaches puberty. He visits the girl's relatives from time to time and offers them gifts.

584 When the girl is old enough to be married, he takes 50,000
583 cowries (if he is wealthy), skirt cloths, salt, kola nuts, and gives it
593 all to the relatives. Then, the old women in the daughter's family lead her to the home of the betrothed man's relatives. The father kills a sheep, makes a lot of couscous, buys dolo to celebrate her arrival. Then he offers the girl six or seven baskets containing respectively 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 cowries. The young man himself gives his betrothed four or five skirts. If he is very wealthy, he gives her one or two little girls as slaves.

585 On the evening when the wedding is celebrated, the father asks
[426] one of his neighbors to lend him a hut, and the young married pair are sent there all alone (they will remain there as long as their soukala is not built). On the morrow, the feasting begins. People dance and feast for seven days at the gates of the father's soukala, at least when the girl is a virgin. If she is not, the feasting is curtailed but nevertheless lasts for another three days.

583 When the father is poor, he offers a few kola nuts to the girl's
591 /549/ father (six or ten). He gives the father and mother some firewood he gathered in the bush, straw to make sɛ́ko /Tr.: mats/ for door, 2,000 cowries, a skirt cloth. He kills a sheep to make

592 Here we get an average of 144 persons per family, 15 persons per
596 compound, and 6 persons per household. This gives 2 or 3 households
162 per compound and 9 to 10 compounds per family.
261 Finally, here are some figures obtained among the Mossi in the northern part of the /Ouahigouya/ circle /a circle is an administrative district/.

Villages	Compounds	Persons	Average per Compound	Observations
Boulzoma	1	39 (1)	39	(1) 7 households
Aoréma	50	672	13	
Bogoya	[illegible]	379 (2)	13	(2) 64 households
Yabonsoro	37	494 (3)	13	(3) 74 households
Bagayaloro	14	290	21	
Barélogo	17	317	19	
Lilligondé	12	177	15	
Rikou	33	486	15	
Dinghiri	59	725	12	
Dinghila	44	362	8	
Irigué	17	94	6	
Bahn (Mossi)	3	54	18	
Pogoro	38	334	8	
Ninighé	7	75	11	
Séghé	8	111	14	
Tibo	19	228	12	
Totals	388	4,837	12 to 13	

Here we have only 12 or 18 persons per compound (and 6 per household). This shows an evolution of the Mossi family of Yatenga toward /227/ a more disintegrated form, which we shall discuss later when we mention the exceptions.

If we summarize the preceding statistics, we obtain the following table.

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Locations	Families	Compounds	Persons
Diogoré, etc.	43	179	5, 248
Oula, etc.	32	127	3, 313
Koussouka	24	228	3, 456
Northern part	?	369	4, 609
	?	903	16, 626

This gives us on an average 18 to 19 persons per compound and 121 persons per family (1).

1. This figure of 18 to 19 persons is an average one. Actually, there are some Mossi compounds which contain only 3 persons and others which boast as many as 100. To give a better idea of the matter, I shall provide below a numerical breakdown of the village of Diessiré (canton of Léba) where there are 286 persons and 15 compounds, or an average of 19 persons per compound. In reality, no one compound holds exactly 19 people.

Compounds	Households	Persons
First compound	4	24
Second compound	3	18
Third compound	1	6
Fourth compound	2	11
Fifth compound	4	23
Sixth compound	3	17
Seventh compound	1	5
Eighth compound	2	12
Ninth compound	2	12
Tenth compound	1	6
Eleventh compound	2	12
Twelfth compound	14	81
Thirteenth compound	3	18

Fourteenth compound	6	36
Fifteenth compound	1	5
	49	286

This gives us, therefore:

Compounds with several households (more than two)	7
Compounds with several households (two)	4
Compounds with a single household	4
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Now that these statistics have been listed, let us examine in detail the groupings larger than the single household, which may be categorized as follows: (1) the total family; (2) the compound; (3) the work group.

The total family. —As we stated earlier, the total family /228/ does not occupy one and the same compound. It is divided into a number of zaka or iri of varying size (the average number given by the above statistics is five). One of these compounds is that of the boudoukasaman or head of the family, who governs the whole family and is at the same time the head of his own zaka and head of his work group. As head of the family, he holds definitively only three types of powers: (1) religious powers; (2) judicial powers; (3) the right to give the daughters of the whole family in marriage.

As head of the family, he has no economic powers.

We shall study the religious powers of the boudoukasaman in detail under "Religion (Sacerdotal Organization)" /not translated/. Let us simply state here that although the head of the total family holds the highest religious powers, the zakasoba or heads of compounds are not totally deprived of them, and this contributes to the greater autonomy of these subfamilies.

I am borrowing the following particulars on the family head and the family council which assists him from Vadier's excellent monograph, here and there correcting some inexact details.

"The head of the family, or patriarch," says Vadier, "is the oldest member of the family. It is he who is the head of it.

"He enjoys great authority over all family members, but exclusively in regard to personal matters. To him alone, after obtaining the consent of the fathers, belongs the right to give the young girls of the

596 family in marriage. Likewise, the head of the family, assisted by the family council, settles all the little differences which arise between relatives. He also intervenes when a father fails to secure the obedience of one of his children or cannot manage to discipline him.

"It is he alone who must sacrifice animals for the benefit of the whole family when his relatives bring them to him on the occasion of family feasts.

"All the members of the family owe obedience to the family head. Likewise, they must show him the greatest respect.

"When the family elder dies, his younger brother becomes head of the family. When all his brothers have successively held this office, the eldest son of the eldest brother becomes the family head after the brothers, etc.

"Sometimes the head of the family does not live in the same village as the rest of the family. He may very well live with some of his sons or brothers, away from his other relatives, but his powers remain unchanged.

"In addition to the family head, there is the family council which is made up of all the men and old women of the family. This body has no well-defined role. It meets under the leadership of the family head to settle all matters concerning the family. The council would decide, for example, as to whether an incorrigible child should be sent to a naba /ruler/, as to who should intervene /229/ in case of a quarrel over an inheritance, who should seize the goods of a spendthrift in order to dole them out to him in proportion to his needs, etc."

592 351 The compound. —The Mossi compound consists of a certain number of round earthen huts or cabins surmounted by thatched roofs and huts for millet, all crowded into a rather narrow space cut by passages, hallways, small courtyards, etc. This complex is surrounded by a moderately high earth wall (two meters) which encircles the huts or cabins and encloses the compound.

592 361 The compounds are scattered over the plain, 50 or 100 meters apart. Some are larger than others: some have 15 or 20 huts or even more; others have but four or five (2).

192 2. To designate these compounds, the word soukala or sokala is often used. This word is hallowed by custom in Yatenga, in the Ouagadougou area, in the Léo area, etc., in short, in all Mossi lands and their

192 dependencies, as well as in the language of the European officials who inhabit the territory. Actually, the word sokala is not Mossi but Mandé /Mande/. In Bambara the hut is called so, in Malinké /Malinke/ sou. Soukala or sokala means exactly "the walls of the hut" (from kala, which means "bone" and by extension all elongated things, walls among them, and from so or sou, whose meaning we have learned already). This word was brought here from the shores of the Niger at the time of conquest. It is to some extent equivocal, for although it is usually given the meaning of "compound," some Europeans also use it to designate a whole quarter /a village subdivision including several compounds/. This is the meaning given to it by Delafosse (Le Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal-Niger/, Vol. 3, p. 126). As for myself, I always gave it the meaning of "compound" in my Noir du Soudan, that is to say, the meaning which I gave to the term carré or carrée in my monograph on the Noir de Guinée /The Black Population of (French) Guinea/. This word, however, and analogous words which are not strictly native to the region or whose French meaning is not absolutely clear lead to some confusion. We shall return to this subject later.

192 Let us add that the head of the compound is called zakasoba or irisoba (from zaka or iri, "compound," and soba, "chief, master"). Vadier incorrectly designated the head of the total family as zakasoba in his monograph. [596] The head of the total family is the boudoukasaman. The zakasoba is the head of a compound, of a home, of that cluster of huts and millet granaries encircled by a red wall which makes such a distinct and isolated unit on the Mossi plains.

This compound accommodates varying numbers of people, 18 or 19 being the average (with exceptions), as we have seen above.

596 In the sense of integration, we must mention primarily the families
592 of great chiefs. For example, there is the family of Gombiraogo, a
182 former Baloum Naba, a very wealthy and important personage. He
591 has five brothers. Two of them live together in the village of Kalo and another two, similarly, in the village of Bembéla. Gombiraogo lives in Ouahigouya with the fifth brother. With this brother he has three zaka where 70 or 80 people live, all of whom work for him and form a single work group under his direction (that is to say, during the rainy season they work for him two days out of three, and during the dry season they do so only when he has exceptional need of them; in return, he provides them with food seven months out of twelve, according to custom, and does not provide them with clothes unless they are unmarried).

What should be noted here is the strength of this work group (70 to 80 people). As a result, it includes several compounds, while it is the compound as a rule that contains several or at least two work groups.

345 The present Baloum Naba, the prime minister, likewise has two zaka working for him. Moreover, the total family of the Baloum Naba is not assembled in Ouahigouya but scattered throughout Yatenga.

343 In the same connection, the Rassam Naba has a zaka of 157 people who form a single work group under his direction. In return, he provides them with food all year.

294 /232/ Again, there is a zaka of shoemakers at Ouahigouya which
592 includes nearly 100 people altogether, among them 15 or 20 full-
182 grown men, all of them shoemakers. They all work for the zakasoba, who provides them all with food. This zaka, of exceptional numerical strength, is at the same time completely integrated.

596 At the other end of the scale, we find the Mossi family of Yatenga
182 evolving toward complete disintegration in certain parts of the terri-
592 tory, that is to say, evolving toward a state of affairs where nothing remains except the total family on the one hand and the single household on the other (that is, the compound has only a single household).

Thus, in the course of a journey through the canton of Ratenga, I noted in the village of Tangué a family of 110 persons distributed among 14 homes. This gives an average of only seven or eight persons per home. In Kargo (another village) there are five Mossi families for 22 homes sheltering 181 persons, or only eight persons per home.

596 182 592 Here the zaka is quite clearly reduced to the single household, which becomes identified at the same time with the compound and with the work group. Let us state, however, that in the whole of Ratenga there are 4, 637 Mossi for 458 compounds, or ten persons per compound. An average of ten people per compound represents slightly more than a single household (which averages six persons in Yatenga), but not as much as two households. This means that the compounds sometimes contain two households, sometimes only one. Thus, since there are only a few people in each zaka, there is but a single work group.

162 592 621 Here is a complete numerical breakdown of the canton of Ratenga.

Villages	Inhabitants	Compounds	Average per Compound
Napalra	254	20	13
Ouembatenga	61	5	12
Alaga	335	22	15
Boulounga	197	23	9
Bani	387	30	13
Singuitenga	248	18	14
Boudé	69	11	6
Foulgo-Koquin	22	5	4
Zomkalga	88	12	7
Momoné	86	10	9
Toïsi	100	13	8
Denian	4	1	4
Pinsi	145	13	11
Dologa	110	15	7
Kiédéwendé	103	10	10
/233/ Koundi-Bittou	63	9	7
Yalka	56	4	14
Koumbango	221	19	12
Kourpellé	167	15	11
Zimtenga	307	39	8
Battenga	94	11	9
Badnoro	83	10	8
Douré	96	6	16
Yalgatenga	45	8	6

596 /234/ The kind of family found in the cantons of Ratenga and
592 Tougo is quite similar in type to the family among the Mossi of
182 Ouagadougou, or in its common types (3) which are characterized by

3. See my Noir du Soudan, pp. 544-553.

the fact that the zaka is identified with the single household, and only the total family and the single household remain.

This leads us to note that the average Mossi family of Yatenga, as we have described it above, is more compact, more communal, more integrated than the Mossi family of Ouagadougou.

182 This results, I believe, from the fact that the primitive element
563 of the population, the Foulsé (the basic element, let us not forget,
592 at Ouagadougou as well as in Yatenga), who are more communal than
596 the Mossi, are still much more numerous in Yatenga than in the Ouagadougou region. While in the latter area the Foulsé blended almost completely with the mass of invaders, in Yatenga they resisted more successfully, did not blend with them, and continued to make up the greater part of the population. In view of these circumstances, they probably exercised considerable influence on the morphology of the Mossi family, just as they gave it their prejudices against the ownership of cattle, etc.

This high proportion of the primitive communal element no doubt caused the structural differences between the Mossi family of the Ouagadougou region and that of Yatenga.

000 Women and the household. —We shall deal now with women and the household. We shall subdivide this section into a number of headings as follows.

1. Promise of marriage.
2. Persons whose consent is required to validate the promise of marriage.
3. Gifts.
4. Celebration and consummation of marriage.
5. Impediments to marriage.
6. Question of virginity.
7. Rights and duties of the husband and wife.
8. Polygamy.
9. Organization of the polygamous household.
10. Women's tasks.
11. The conjugal duty.

584 bearing dolo /millet beer/; they will serve as witnesses. In their presence, the head of the family mentions by name to the suitor the girl he is granting to him and who will be delivered to him as a wife later when she is old enough to take a husband.

"Then the betrothed man with the friends he brought goes to visit every soukala head in the village, greets them in accordance with Mossi custom, and announces to them that such-and-such a family head has promised him a young girl in marriage. The whole village is thus made witnesses."

Persons whose consent is required to validate a promise of marriage.

[562] —"The consent of the young girl," says Vadier, "is by no means required. In fact, she is disposed of without being consulted, and she is always forced to become the wife of the man to whom she has been promised, except if her future husband is a leper or blind. The /236/ young girl is actually supposed to be unacquainted with the name of her prospective husband until she is taken to him.

"To validate the marriage, the following people must express their consent.

"1. The future husband. His consent follows from the transactions undertaken by his father or by himself with the family of his future wife.

"2. The girl's father. When a Mossi has one or several daughters and when he thinks the moment has come for the head of the family to dispose of them, he tells the latter that he can promise them in marriage. In spite of his powers, the head of the family could not betroth a young girl unless her father had told him that he could give her in marriage.

"When he has chosen a husband, he goes to see the father of the girl and makes known to him the offer he has received. The father can accept or refuse as he sees fit. His consent is absolutely indispensable, and the head of the family cannot ignore it.

"The father cannot dispose of his daughter without the consent of the family head, except in circumstances we shall examine later.

584 596 "3. The head of the family. The consent of the head of the family is inevitably required, since it is he alone who has the power to promise the young girls of his family in marriage under the terms described above. Three cases where the consent of the family head is not indispensable are as follows: (1) when the father of the young girl is at odds with the head of the family, the father alone may dispose of his

584 daughter; (2) when the father is in extreme penury, he gives his still
● 596 unpromised daughter to some rich native who, with the customary gifts, will help him in his need, since the gifts of the fiancé go to the man who promised the young girl; (3) the first daughter in a household,
[603] whether or not she is the only daughter, must be promised by her maternal grandfather and not by the head of the family."

This constitutes, I believe, a curious vestige of matriarchy which doubtless refers to those very distant times when the Mossi family revolved around the maternal rather than the paternal line.

The mother of the young girl. "The girl's mother," says Vadier, "is sometimes consulted. Her husband merely asks her if she is satisfied with the choice he has made in agreement with the head of the family. Her answer, however, is given no weight whatever.

"The fiancé's mother is not even consulted."

Such at least is the theory. In reality, no doubt, the mother of the young girl often has more authority than the theory supposes.

431 583 [71] Gifts.—Bride price is nonexistent in Mossi marriage. This is a very important point which differentiates the Mossi and even, I believe, the Voltaic /237/ tribes in general, from the Mandé groups, such as the Bambara and Malinké, where bride price does exist and is actually quite high (I say quite high, considering the general poverty of the Sudanese). I did not emphasize this sufficiently in my Noir du Soudan in the chapter concerning the Mossi family, pages 548 and 549. I did mention that the price paid to win a Mossi girl of the Ouagadougou region ranged from 1, 500 cowries (1. 50 francs) to 50, 000 cowries (50 francs). In fact, these are gifts rather than bride price.

Although there is no bride price, properly speaking, the gifts have an important role.

"After the promise of marriage," says Vadier, "the future husband must come every year, after the filikienga /a feast/, to bring a few small gifts to the head of the family and to the girl's mother. These consist as a rule of a little millet, salt, a few hundred cowries, a mat, or two or three crudely made séko /coarse matting/.

"As for the father, he receives no gifts, which does not mean that he does not benefit from those received by his wife or by the head of the family.

"Likewise, the girl receives no gifts. Moreover, she may not utilize the commodities or foodstuffs given to her mother.

"The gifts offered during the long betrothal period cannot be of great value. A prospective husband who should bring 5, 000 or 6, 000

566 gone into Mossi hands. The bagaré did not till the soil. They simply minded their master's herds. As for other work, they also built the straw huts where the Moro Naba of Yatenga, the Riziam Naba, and other chiefs slept at the New Year (we shall see under "Religion" /not translated/ to what purpose).

The bagaré saw to their own support (food and clothing). The multiplying herd belonged to the naba, but its yield (milk and butter) went to the bagaré. Out of this yield, however, they gave the naba whatever he needed of milk and butter.

567 In short, we can see that among the Mossi and Foulsé there exist, or rather existed, the two kinds of slaves known throughout the /French/ Sudan, the trade slaves and the house slaves, the former being salable and the latter a part of the family. Nowadays, as a result of the prohibition against their purchase and sale, there remains but a dwindling number of house slaves.

421 Now we come to family property and its transmission.

●596 Family property, properly so-called. —There is no family property among our Mossi, since no work is done in common by the whole family. The family property is limited to family charms owned by the boudoukasaman.

423 Property of the compound, or subfamily property. —This does not
592 exist either, for the same reason, except for the compound itself which is the communal property of the zaka group. While each household has huts of its own, these huts are a usufructuary possession which is in accordance with the full ownership of the zaka group. Now, if some household chief wishes to build a new hut, he notifies the zakasoba, who, incidentally, always grants permission. Once the hut is built, the builder may destroy it if he wishes, which goes to prove that he has full ownership over it, having made it. He cannot, however, destroy the hut where he lives which he did not build as it actually belongs to the zaka. In short, there may be in the compound a mixture of communal property (belonging to the zaka) and individual property (hut built by a household or by an individual, millet granary erected in the same circumstances, etc.), but the communal property prevails by far.

423 Property of the work group. —Here, communal property is impor-
571 tant. /268/ It is from the group fields that the group derives most of its sustenance (seven months out of twelve). The work implements

428 Now let us deal with the transmission of property or inheritance.

596 Transmission of the property of the total family. —Since such property does not exist, it is not transmitted, except the family charms. The status of family head, however, is transmitted. When a family head dies, it is the oldest remaining man of the family (sometimes his brother, sometimes his cousin, etc.) who takes command of the family.

428 592 Transmission of the compound and its property. —When the head of a compound dies, it is the oldest man in the compound (brother, cousin, etc.) who takes command of it. At the same time he takes over the management of the property communally owned by the whole compound.

428 571 Transmission of the property of the work group. —When the head of a work group dies, it is likewise the oldest man in the group (usually the younger brother of the deceased) who assumes leadership and the management of the group's property (fields, work implements, etc.)

Let us note that in all these transmissions, when there are no longer any men of the same generation, then the sons of all the brothers, cousins, etc., are chosen, beginning with the eldest. That is to say, when one generation is exhausted, the next generation is tapped.

428 Transmission of household property. —When a married Mossi who has /271/ children dies, his eldest brother (born of the same father and mother or only of the same father) receives the inheritance. He does not take everything, however. He is expected to share, up to a point, with the other brothers (born of the same father and mother or only of the same father) and with the sons if they are old enough.

The oldest brother takes the huts and the field. The wives, on the other hand, are divided among the brothers and even among the sons if the latter are grown. If the wives are not numerous, the oldest brother does not get any more of them than the other sharers. The livestock is divided among the same people, but this time the largest share goes not to the brother who is unqualifiedly the oldest, but to the oldest brother born of the same father and mother. The cowries, coins, movable property, and jewelry are divided in the same manner. Weapons are apportioned, but the largest share goes to the brother who is unqualifiedly the oldest. The latter takes the dead man's bow and quiver, while dividing the arrows among the brothers and sons without bypassing himself.

As we can see, sharing does take place and is actually quite a complex matter, since it is sometimes the eldest of all the brothers

428 As a result, an heir may come into his share of the inheritance through a gift received during the lifetime of the deceased.

431 /273/ Gifts inter vivos. —A Mossi may, while alive, give away whatever he pleases of his own property.

Since he is absolute master of these goods and thus entitled to use them as he sees fit, no one has the right to question the gifts he makes.

421 Incidentally, let us recall that heads of families, compounds, work groups, and households are only the managers and not the owners, in the Roman sense, of the family, zaka, work group, or household property, respectively. As for private, individual goods on which the jus utendi et abutendi may be exercised, we know what they amount to among the Mossi. In practice, moreover, the Mossi are far from taking much advantage of this theoretical right. Here, nevertheless, we are concerned with theory, and the following rules pertain to it.

431 A gift made inter vivos must be made before several witnesses in order to be valid.

No special status is required in order to receive a gift.

The wife possesses the same rights as the husband. The gift will [837] nevertheless be worthless if it is proved that the beneficiary is or was her lover.

●596 We are now finished with the Mossi family.

To summarize, as we already stated earlier, this family is communal and patriarchal.

Its communalism, however, is quite unstable. People live, not in family groups, but in family subgroups (the zaka). They work, not in family subgroups, but in sub-subgroups (the work groups). In former times, the zaka may have been a community of labor as well as a community of habitation. As we shall see later /not translated/, this is now the case among the Foulsé or Nioniossé /Nyonyose/, where sometimes it is the zaka that constitutes the community of labor and sometimes it is the work group, and where there seems to be an evolution from the former state of affairs to the latter.

As for patriarchy, it is very clearly defined and established. The family revolves around the man and not around the woman. As I have stated, certain signs induce us to believe that the Mossi family, like the Sudanese family in general, was once matriarchal in the very distant past. At all events, this has long ceased to be the case, and we are dealing now with an unstable communalism paired with clearly defined patriarchy.

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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When a young Catholic receives a wife through the mission, he may visit her father and pay the customary respect by giving him kola nuts and brass coins. The father of a mission girl may accept or reject his son-in-law as he sees fit, but formerly he could not defy the power of the missions.

A pagan youth who wishes to marry one of the mission girls has to discuss the matter with the priests and swear publicly that he will become a Christian. Before 1946 the young man had to fulfill his promise or be intimidated by the chief and the missionaries until he relented or fled the district. Today, however, the priests usually abandon their efforts to obtain the conversion of the young men after three months have passed. In some cases the young men take their wives and move to other districts, and return only after the girls have given up Catholicism. Despite the lure of wives from the mission, not many young men become Christians on this account because the Mossi are still concerned primarily with family relationships and the effect that conversion would have on these relationships.

The church's prohibition of polygyny is by far the most serious bar to the spread of Catholicism. Many men do not adopt Catholicism simply because they fear that monogamous marriages would not produce children. Father Paternot (Considine 1954:103) has cited a study purporting to show that Christian Mossi have more children than the pagans, but the ordinary people of the district would not accept the facts he presented. They cite their personal experience to the contrary. Dim Delobson (1934:136), a Mossi converted to Catholicism, states:

> A certain number of Christians of my acquaintance whose wives did not have children during the first years of marriage had recourse to magical practices in order to get children. These simple people thought that although they had an omnipotent God beside them, they could impudently—after all the good priests will not know about it—ask the little, but also powerful gods to grant them some material favors here on earth. When the gods given children were taken for Holy Baptism, they were given Christian names instead of the names of the earth shrines, and they did not wear magical charms which would have indicated to the priest the real state of affairs. Nevertheless, the children were bathed in water to which magical potions were added, and when the mothers went to visit their parents, sacrifices of chickens were given to the benevolent Tengkougas.

The Mossi's strong desire for children is admittedly one of the main reasons for leaving the Catholic Church so that they can take other spouses in addition to barren ones. The church has now belatedly recognized this problem and, knowing that it cannot prevent men from taking plural wives, allows them to come to church but prohibits them from taking the Mass.

Many cultural factors besides the desire for children make polygyny important for the Mossi, and make conversion detrimental to the functioning of their family system. Because of lineage opposition to their conversions, some converts are forced to establish nuclear households—a practice out of harmony with the normal rhythm of Mossi life. The reason for this disharmony is that Mossi women married to Catholics must work alone instead of with

power and authority were inherited by their families in the same manner as among Mossi lineages.

The last important category of Mossi chiefs included men who ruled over slave and serf villages. These men were themselves the descendants of slaves and serfs, for no free-born Mossi were placed in such posts. Needless to say, these chiefs were never lineally or collaterally related to the district chiefs, and therefore were never nobles. However, they might be affinally related to district chiefs, and in such cases the relationship was often of some political value.

It must be emphasized that once a man was made chief, he was respected, if not honored, by all the people of the district. In some districts, the Dapore Naba and the Baglere Naba, chiefs of two categories of serfs, were among the most valued assistants of the Kombere Naba. The only people who sometimes refused to honor the village chiefs were the nakomce, who were the holders of the district nam. Nevertheless, they were censored by the Kombere if they were disrespectful to his subordinates. No district chief could allow his government to be jeopardized by the maltreatment of persons who served it. In any conflict between the nam and the kin group, the supremacy of the nam was always maintained.

Every Mossi ruler, whether he held the nam of a kingdom, principality, district, or village, was *ipso facto* also *Boodkasma* (literally, "family head") of the local segment of his boodoo. The word boodoo refers to patrilineal groups that anthropologists would normally call clans, maximal lineages, major lineages, or minor lineages. The Mossi do not make any terminological distinction between these levels of their segmentary lineage system. Nevertheless, they recognize and use the status differences between these units to limit the access of each unit to the corporate assets of the boodoo. Their major social distinction is drawn between the minor lineage, which is also called boodoo, and its component minimal lineages. Each minimal-lineage unit is called a *babissi* (literally, "father's brother"), and is really a large extended family composed of relatives who had a common ancestor, three, four, or at most five generations ago.

The Mogho Naba, for example, was head of his babissi as well as ex officio head of the entire royal clan. Those rulers who claimed equality with him claimed that they, not he, were the true heads of the royal clan and the "direct" descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri. As a function of their political position, the many princes and district chiefs were heads of their own babissi and of the maximal lineage to which their babissi belonged. Like the Mogho Naba, they were the ex officio heads of all members of their boodoo who lived in their territory and who claimed descent from the same royal ancestors.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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[P.78]

V

LAW AND THE JUDICIAL PROCESS

671 The Mossi possessed a comprehensive body of rules governing human conduct. These rules were well known to the people, and violators were punished by the responsible authorities. The Mossi might be said to have had substantive law, but they had no written codes. Nevertheless, the lack of written codes does not warrant Mangin's blanket criticism of Mossi judicial processes: "Of course, there was no written code, no formal scale of penalties. Everything depended on custom and on the whim of the judge. [662] Thus, the wealthy could obtain sentences in their favor by paying the judges, and thieves could avoid punishment by sharing their loot with the Naba."[1] Custom did dictate the penalties, just as "written custom" dictates penalties [692] in all written legal codes. But, as we shall see, the Mossi did have a known [695] scale of penalties. Moreover, a Mossi judge had to be careful in rendering judgment, because his decisions could be reviewed by a higher court.

596 681 The head of the Mossi extended family, the *Yirisoba*, was responsible for the everyday conduct of his charges. It was his duty to settle all family quarrels, and to punish persons guilty of theft within the compound, disrespect toward elders, and incest. Punishment for the lesser wrongs included 596 683 684 reprimands and floggings. A person found guilty of disrespect to the elders or of incest could be banished from the group. But banishment was so severe that it was imposed only if the criminal refused to make the usual conciliatory gestures and was condemned by all the members of his boodoo. Even after this condemnation, however, he could ask a "sister's son," a yagenga, [613] to intercede for him. This man, the son of a female lineage member, had many privileges within his mother's brother's lineage, including the right to mediate between an exile and his boodoo.

593 586 613 Amicable relations within the family group were most often disrupted by conjugal difficulties. A Mossi husband could occasionally flog an erring wife, but he was not allowed to maltreat her. When a man became disgusted with his wife and wished to repudiate her, he put her water pots in the compound yard. This rather serious action often led to hostile relations

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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did not derive any revenue from his judicial functions. He could not levy a fine against any malefactor. However, his intermediary position between the villagers and the district chief did permit him to obtain some revenue whenever commodities moved from one level to the other.

The officials who administered the villages for the district chief received part of their revenue from the villages under their charge. These local administrators had no courts or retainers comparable to those at the provincial level. However, they did have a large number of wives who contributed valuable agricultural labor. These administrators were permitted to ask the village chiefs for sosose on their own fields several times during the planting season, but—unlike the district chiefs—they were not permitted to have the villagers cultivate special fields for them. In return for any help received, they had to provide food and drink for the workers.

The administrator received most of his revenue as a by-product of active duty in the villages. When he visited a village or transmitted a message to a village chief, he almost invariably received a sheep, a goat, a chicken, or some millet, from the village chief. He also acquired large quantities of goods during the village interregnum: he received gifts from the chief's heirs during the chief's funeral; he received additional presents when they took the fado to the district chief; he could prolong the interregnum in order to receive as many bribes as possible from contenders for the nam; and he was handsomely rewarded when the candidate he had backed was finally installed in office.

The extended family was the basic socio-economic unit supporting the Mossi political organization. The Yirisoba received land rights in his saka from his Sakakasma, who had obtained his rights from the village chief. An extended family in need of additional land would seek help from its Sakakasma or its Boodkasma. When the family no longer needed this land, it reverted to the lineage. If all the land granted to the lineage was already occupied, the extended family, through its lineage head, asked the village chief for more land. The chief usually granted this request, unless he had no more weogho available. In this case, the needy Yirisoba sometimes tried to borrow land from his non-kin neighbors. Such a step was not undertaken lightly, however. If a man borrowed land from his own lineage members or from the chief, the land rights reverted to its donors without difficulty. However, if he borrowed land from another lineage and either he or his benefactor died without assuring the return of the land, litigation often ensued. In some cases a man would seek land from his lineage brothers in another village, who let him use some of their land with their chief's permission. Some Yirisobadamba even asked their district chief for

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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permission to use weogho in the district, and new hamlets arose in this way. A Yirisoba who could not obtain adequate land on which to grow food for his family left the district and sought land elsewhere, especially among his mother's patrilineage. However, village and district chiefs always tried to prevent this because they did not like to lose any of their subjects.

As director of economic activities in the household, the Yirisoba supervised the agricultural labor of his charges. It was he who directed the work of his wives, his sons, and his sons' wives, and supervised the care of the family herd. He provided the cotton, which was carded and spun by the women and woven by the men. It was also his task to ensure adequate clothing for the members of his household; and he sold excess commodities in order to buy salt, kola nuts, bracelets, foreign clothes, and other products imported from the forest and desert zones. In each case, the Yirisoba had to balance judiciously the requirements of his household against his obligations to the community and to the political hierarchy. He had to prevent economic rivalry among his sons, and especially among his sons' wives. He had to make sure that every married member of the household had sufficient time to provide goods and services for his own family, and that foodstuffs were distributed equitably among the wives. Finally, he had to use the resources of the household to build and maintain the nexus of socioeconomic relationships that provided wives for the male members of the household, and to meet his obligations to the political hierarchy.

The Yirisoba also had social and economic responsibilities toward the other members of his babissi and boodoo. He furnished labor and goods to needy lineage members and to non-relatives with whom he had marriage arrangements. Since much of this help was given on the basis of ultimate reciprocity, very little loss was involved. However, the relationship between commoner and noble families was quite different. In theory, the nobles had no claims on the property of the commoners; but in practice, they did claim such rights. Furthermore, commoner lineages often gave the nobles many more wives than the nobles returned. This inequality enabled the nobles to receive more goods and services from their marriage partners among the commoners than they gave in return. The nobles thus took advantage of their power as possessors of the nam, but even membership in the royal lineage did not exempt them from supporting the governmental services at all levels. This duty was incumbent upon every Moaga.

The Mossi people could not refuse to support their political organization, but often complained about having to do so. Many Mossi felt that their rulers were greedy and avaricious and received too many gifts. Some Mossi held that if the chiefs were not placated with goods and services,